



BUILDING COMMUNITY TO MAKE LIFE BETTER

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20Years of Hope in the Performing & Visual Arts Camp at West Las Vegas Arts Center

The city's Performing and Visual Arts Camp at the West Las Vegas Arts Center is celebrating its 20th anniversary, culminating in a special performance Aug. 20 at the Smith Center for the Performing Arts. We set down with one of the founders of the camp this week to talk about the impact the camp has had on the community and our local youth.

"We started modestly in 1996 with just 26 kids and a Community Development Block Grant," said Marcia Robinson, cultural supervisor at the

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West Las Vegas Arts Center and also a professional musician. “The children brought their lunches. Today, we have 72 kids enrolled in the Performing and Visual Arts Camp. We have averaged 70 for the last five years – one year we had 80, but that was just too many. Today we have seven teachers and some youth leaders, funding from a Clark County Outside Grant, and free lunches for the kids provided by the Nevada Partners culinary program.”

Though many details have changed over the years, the founding principles have remained the same. They still use the performing arts to attract the youth. And while they teach them dance, theatre, vocal music and technical skills, they work to instill in them the values, character and leadership skills that will help them build happy, useful, successful lives.

“It’s all about mentoring,” Robinson said. “We bring in master teachers in dance, theatre and music from around the country who will teach them more than technical skills. They dialogue about life, integrity and what’s really important that will help these kids make it. Even the shows we choose to produce every year are selected for stories that make a difference. Alumni of the program wrote the last two shows.”

This year’s show – “**AMANDLA...Power to US!**” – will be performed Aug. 20 at 7 p.m. at The Smith Center for the Performing Arts, sponsored by NV Energy and local community supporters. Admission is free, but a ticket is required to attend the performance. Call 702-749-2000 for tickets.

“We’re proud of what this community has created,” Robinson said. “We want our young people to take what we can give them, move forward and open a path for others.”

Is that not the hope of every teacher and mentor? For more information, call 702-229-4800 or visit www.artslasvegas.org.

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